

Steven leaned out the front door and whistled. It was dark outside and time for Ralph to come in. Ralph was Steven's dog but nobody knew what kind of dog Ralph was. He looked a little bit like a German shepherd and a little bit like a collie. It did not matter to Steven what kind of dog Ralph was. All that mattered was that Ralph was a good dog to have around.

Steven whistled for Ralph again. Why didn't Ralph come to the door? "Maybe he caught a rabbit or something," Steven thought. "I'll go out and look for him." Steven took a flashlight from the shelf. He walked out of the front door and around the house and shone the flashlight in the bushes. Steven could not see any sign of Ralph. Steven whistled and called for Ralph, but Ralph did not come to Steven.

Steven walked back to the house with his head hung low. What could have happened to Ralph? Steven's father said Ralph could have been bitten by a snake or Ralph could have run away. Father's words made Steven feel very sad. "Ralph may be just a dog," Steven said, "but he is my best friend." All that night, Steven tossed and turned. He could not sleep knowing that Ralph was out there in the cold darkness.

The next morning, Steven got up and ate his breakfast. After breakfast, Steven went outside and walked around the yard looking for Ralph. He whistled and called for Ralph but Ralph still did not come to Steven's whistle. Steven decided to walk down the road a few yards. He whistled and called for Ralph all the way down the road.

All of a sudden, Steven heard a sound. He stopped in the road to listen. Steven heard the sound again. The sound was a whimpering

sound, like that of a dog whimpering. Steven whistled and followed the whimpering sound into the woods on the side of the road.

The whimpering sounds became so loud that Steven knew he was near a dog. Steven looked down and saw Ralph lying in a bed of leaves and twigs. Ralph was lying on his side, with his paw caught in a hunter's trap. Steven carefully took Ralph's foot out of the trap and wrapped Ralph up in a coat to carry him home. Ralph licked his chin as if to say, "Thank you!"

That evening, Ralph and Steven lay by the fire. Steven and his father had taken Ralph to the vet as soon as Steven brought him home. The vet said that Ralph's foot was badly hurt but it would heal. He bandaged Ralph's foot and sent him home. Steven gave Ralph a big hug because he was very happy to have Ralph home again.

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